Unit .21

Session .02

Jesus Reveals His Mission

Scripture

Luke 4:16-31

16 He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. As usual, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. **17** The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him, and unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written: **18** The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, **19** to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. **20** He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. And the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him. **21** He began by saying to them, "Today as you listen, this Scripture has been fulfilled." **22** They were all speaking well of him and were amazed by the gracious words that came from his mouth; yet they said, "Isn't this Joseph's son?" **23** Then he said to them, "No doubt you will quote this proverb to me: 'Doctor, heal yourself. What we've heard that took place in Capernaum, do here in your hometown also.'" **24** He also said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in his hometown. **25** But I say to you, there were certainly many widows in Israel in Elijah's days, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months while a great famine came over all the land. **26** Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them except a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. **27** And in the prophet Elisha's time, there were many in Israel who had leprosy, and yet not one of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." **28** When they heard this, everyone in the synagogue was enraged. **29** They got up, drove him out of town, and brought him to the edge of the hill that their town was built on, intending to hurl him over the cliff. **30** But he passed right through the crowd and went on his way. **31** Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbath.

Intro Options

Main Point:
Jesus' mission wasn't without opposition—and neither will ours be.

Option 1

Let your students work alone or in pairs. The Christian Mental Health Institute has hired your group to create a "Rejection-Handling Flow Chart" diagram. It should be a flow chart that asks a yes-no question, then directs the reader to different questions based on the answer; those questions are also yes-no questions, which further direct the reader. The flow chart should start before the possible rejection scenario and follow through. For instance, the chart might open with a bubble labeled "Is there a high chance of rejection?" "No" would lead to, "Go ahead!" whereas "Yes" might lead to, "Is it worth the risk of rejection?" with more yes-no paths branching from there. The chart should include directions for what to do if/when rejection happens (for example, repeat the behavior or don't).

These posters will be put up in schools and businesses around the country, so they should be broad enough to apply to a wide variety of ages and situations.

Give students time to make their charts and then to share. Ask students to consider what Jesus would do if He were to follow their flow charts. Would He keep doing His public ministry? Today's lesson will show us Jesus revealing His mission; surprisingly (or maybe not surprisingly), He will be rejected by His initial hearers.

Option 2

Break your students into small "committees." In their committees, they are to plan a church youth event: specifically, the "Welcome and Introduction" event for new youth. If they can come up with a cooler name, all the better. The purpose of the event is to welcome and introduce new arrivals in the youth group. These new arrivals could be people who are "graduating up" to the youth group or new people who are moving into the area or new Christians. It can be just about whatever kind of event the committee likes (as long as it is at least semi-realistic), but somewhere in the event, the new arrivals should introduce themselves to the crew. The committee should figure out a way to make this introduction as fun as possible (maybe students could do a mini-talent show).

Give them some time to make up agendas and ideas for the event (diagrams and concept drawings are also welcome), and then let them share. See how they do.

Ask how many committees planned on setting their new arrivals up for rejection. Hopefully, none! Today's lesson will show how Jesus revealed His mission: interestingly, it didn't go as swimmingly as your students' ideas hopefully would. You'll show how Jesus presented Himself, how the crowd reacted, and how Jesus reacted to the crowd's reaction.

TEACHING PLAN

Read Luke 4:16-22.

The prophet Isaiah, who lived long before Jesus lived on the earth, prophesied about a coming Messiah, someone who would come to save Israel. Imagine the Jews in the synagogue, who recognized the verses Jesus read, hearing Jesus declare that He is the promised Messiah. How incredible it must have been for this carpenter's son they had known from His youth to declare He was the One coming to save their people!

That Jesus would claim to fulfill even one of over three hundred Old Testament prophecies about the Christ is bold, but He did so because He is who He said He is—the Son of God, the Messiah who came to set the captives free from their sins. Only an all-knowing and all-powerful God could have predicted the Messiah's life with such accuracy hundreds of years before the events even came to pass. The knowledge of God is perfect and extends to all things past, present, and future. We serve a God of complete knowledge, a timeless God who is worthy of our trust.

- **In what ways could the proof of Jesus as the Messiah supported by prophecies impact your life today?**

The passage Jesus quoted from Isaiah 61:1-2, with an insertion from 58:6, reveals that the Messiah's mission was, in summary, to proclaim good news to the poor. Isaiah's prophesy provided hope and freedom to Jewish exiles in Babylon that they would one day be free from their oppressors, but Jesus' ministry was aimed at the ultimate fulfillment of this passage—freedom from sin for the whole world.

By declaring Himself to be the Messiah, Jesus would later offend many, but this didn't shift who He was. As the Messiah, He still acted in accordance with His identity and accomplished the things the Messiah was prophesied to accomplish. The people responded positively to His words at first, but that affirmation was short-lived.

- **What are some ways the good news of Jesus addresses the suffering the world experiences today?**

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 96, DDG)

The World Opposed to God

There are times in Scripture where the term "world" refers to more than the physical planet Earth or the collective human population. In many instances, the term refers to an active and evil spiritual force that is in direct conflict with God and His kingdom. This evil world force operates under Satan's control (Eph. 2:2; John 14:30), displaying the same self-centeredness and deceit that is found within his character. Christians are called to overcome this world of spiritual evil by faith in the Son of God (1 John 5:4-5).

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
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Luke 4

14-22. Luke 4:14-28 places Jesus' ministry in the region of Galilee. Through His teaching and miracles, Jesus demonstrated the power of the Holy Spirit. The news about His ministry spread, and people began to praise Him for the good work He did. But the scene shifted as Luke showed the contrast between Jesus' reception in Galilee and His rejection in Nazareth, the place where He grew up.

It was customary for the Jewish people in Jesus' day to spend time in the synagogue where leaders would read and comment on the ancient Scriptures. When Jesus went into the synagogue, as was the custom, He stood up to read a passage of Scripture. The reading for that day was part of a prophecy from Isaiah that spoke of the coming Messiah.

In a dramatic moment that likely shocked the people in the synagogue, Jesus read a passage that described the ministry of the Messiah, and then He sat down. "Today as you listen, this Scripture has been fulfilled," He said (v. 21). The moment was shocking for a couple of reasons. First, Jesus implied that He was the Messiah upon whom the Spirit rested. He was saying, in effect, "I'm the guy Isaiah was talking about."

Second, Jesus' words were shocking because of what He didn't read. He stopped reading the text at the line where Isaiah spoke of the year of Jubilee and freedom for the captives. The next line spoke about the God's judgment coming upon people. Jesus deliberately ended the reading at the declaration of grace, not judgment. Why? Because the Day of Judgment was to come later. In that particular moment, Jesus declared freedom and grace.

In Defense (p. 98, DDG)

The odds that Jesus could have fulfilled all the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament by chance are astronomical. Peter W. Stoner, once the Chairman of the Departments of Mathematics and Astronomy at Pasadena City College, authored Science Speaks in the 1950s, which examines the accuracy of prophecy and of the Bible using scientific methods. In chapter three, Stoner walks through the statistical likelihood that a man could have fulfilled prophecies about the Messiah, including birthplace and death by crucifixion. He concludes that an extremely conservative estimate of the chances of a man fulfilling just eight messianic prophecies is 1 in 10^{17}. Stoner used the following illustration to help readers grasp this number.

"Suppose that we take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote using their own wisdom."[2]

TEACHING PLAN

Read Luke 4:23-27.

Have you ever heard the saying, "A prophet is without honor in his hometown"? It comes from what Jesus said. The idea behind the phrase is that the people in Jesus' hometown did not see Him as special or unique; they saw Him as ordinary. What's more, they didn't care for His message, even though they wanted to see His miracles.

Sometimes, it's difficult to notice the growth of people who are closest to us. You know what it's like. You don't see the day-to-day growth of your siblings or everyday friends, but you notice immediately when you visit friends or family you haven't seen in awhile. Distance can give us perspective on people.

In a similar way, the people in Nazareth saw Jesus grow up before their eyes. But they could not reconcile that this prophet who was before them was the young boy who had grown up in their midst. They would not accept the truth of Jesus' words as He read the scroll of Isaiah.

- **How difficult do you think it was for Jesus, who came to rescue His people, to experience rejection?**

Jesus responded to the people of Nazareth by referring them to two Old Testament stories, one with Elijah and one with Elisha (both of whom were mighty prophets of God). In both accounts, God did something miraculous for people who were not part of Israel. God sent these prophets into Gentile territory because Israel would not receive the Word of God through their ministry. In rejecting Jesus, the Jews would be rejecting God's blessing, just as their ancestors had. And just as Elijah and Elisha had continued their ministry in serving the Gentiles, so would Jesus leave Nazareth and continue His ministry elsewhere, and through His disciples, His message of good news will reach the ends of the earth.

- **What are some ways we can minister and serve the people on the margins of our community?**

Read Luke 4:28-31.

Once again, the events following Jesus' sermon at Nazareth foreshadowed the events that would come to pass at Jerusalem. The people, angered by His message that the Gentiles had a place in God's salvation story, attempted to throw Him off a cliff in order to kill Him, just like when Jesus would be brought to Pilate and the angry crowds would shout, "Crucify Him!" But Jesus was not to die before His appointed time in Jerusalem; so in Nazareth, He passed through the crowd and left unharmed.

The Nazarenes drove Jesus out of His hometown, foreshadowing the rejection of Christ by the world. Yet Jesus' ultimate rejection at the cross paved the way for all who believe in Him to be accepted rather than rejected by God. Although we deserve to be rejected because of our sins, Christ bore our rejection and paid the debt we owe. Through Him we find salvation.

- **How are you challenged or convicted because Jesus took our rejection upon Himself so we could be accepted by God?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
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Luke 4

23. Jesus, being the divine Son of God, possessed a knowledge of others' thoughts, so He knew those in Nazareth doubted Him. The proverb "Doctor, heal yourself" would be an expression of doubt that Jesus really had performed the miracles they heard He did in Capernaum. Jesus preempted their taunts by predicting they would reject Him, just like the prophets were rejected throughout Israel's history.

24-27. In His declaration about the people's coming rejection of Himself, Jesus referenced Elijah and Elisha, recalling one of the worst periods of apostasy in Israel's history. Elijah and Elisha were prophets to Israel, yet their work often addressed those outside of the nation. When the Israelites rejected God's blessings, those blessings were extended to the Gentiles even though they were outside of God's chosen people.

Activity

Your students will be doing a two-part activity. They can either draw (if they want to work solo) or make a skit (if they want to work with others).

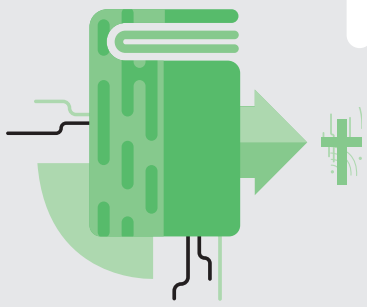
In the first part, they'll produce a scene of rejection. It could be as big or small as they like (so long as it is church-appropriate). It could be not making an athletic team, it could be getting ignored by a friend, it could be getting declined from asking someone to a dance. It shouldn't take too long to act or to draw. Give them a little time to produce their drawings or skits, and then have them share.

For part two, students should now show the person responding to that rejection in a positive way. The scene needs two components: first, the rejected person needs to somehow keep loving the people who rejected him/her, just like Jesus continued ministering in spite of the people's rejection. Second, the rejected person should look to Jesus for the strength to love people; the person could even look at the sweet promises Jesus gave about Himself when He quoted Isaiah's prophecy. The rejected person could have help from another person or not. Give the students time to make their drawings or skits (this second scene will be harder, so give them more time and guidance), and then let them show them.

Debrief what patterns or themes you might have seen. How does Jesus, by both His example and His work, enable us to give grace and compassion to those who reject us? How can we live out Jesus' mission this week?

(p. 97, DDG) Christ Connection

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah wrote of God's plan to send someone to bring good news and redeem His captive people. Jesus proclaimed that He is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy—the promised Messiah. Jesus was rejected by the people, but it was through that very rejection—the cross—that He provided redemption from sin.



JESUS REVEALS HIS MISSION

Luke 4:16–31

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JESUS CONNECTION

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LIFEWISE QUALITY

TRUTHFULNESS – Choosing not to lie or deceive others to protect myself.

HEAD

According to Isaiah, what purpose was Jesus sent for?

The people were amazed by Jesus' teachings and wondered how a common man like Jesus could know such things. What truth did Jesus speak that made His own community want to kill Him?

HEART

Jesus saw and confronted the unbelief of His people. Have you ever realized you needed to speak truthfully to someone? Did you follow through? Why or why not?

Even when we speak the truth in love, some people will reject it. They may even reject us. How does knowing this fact make it difficult to share the truth? How does it help you to know that Jesus experienced rejection so that we could be accepted by God?

HANDS

God calls us both to tell the truth and to be loving, encouraging, gentle and respectful when we do (Ephesians 4:15, 4:29; 1 Peter 3:15). Why is it hard to do both at the same time? Which side do you struggle with more—telling only part of the truth or even a lie to keep someone from getting upset or telling the truth in a harsh and disrespectful way? Write down three ways you can practice godly truthfulness, no matter how others choose to respond and pray that God would help you do these things.